

NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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MARKEY URGES RESTORATION OF FUNDING FOR “DIRTY BOMB” RESPONSE PROGRAM ELIMINATED BY BUSH BUDGET

Program has provided MA with \$4.5 million to assist emergency personnel to respond to attacks using weapons of mass destruction

WASHINGTON, DC - Representative Edward Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the House Committee on Homeland Security and the House Energy and Commerce Committee, today sent a bi-partisan letter signed by 56 Members of Congress to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security urging restoration of funding for the Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS), which was slated for elimination by the Bush Administration budget for the second year in a row. MMRS is the only federal program that helps first responders, medical personnel, emergency management workers, businesses and other stakeholders develop effective, integrated capabilities to minimize casualties in the event of a terrorist attack using a weapon of mass destruction, including a so-called "dirty bomb".

“The Metropolitan Medical Response System provides unique services that are urgently needed, given the determination of terrorist groups to acquire a weapon of mass destruction and detonate it within our country,” Rep. Markey said. “Yet for the second year in a row, the Bush Administration is taking the misguided position that this innovative program – which helps local emergency personnel across the country prepare for a WMD attack – should be eliminated. Today we are urging appropriators to restore funding for this vital program.” Rep. Markey said.

President Bush’s FY06 budget request eliminates funding for the MMRS program, which has provided funding for emergency personnel in Boston, Springfield and Worcester. When the Bush Administration tried to eliminate MMRS last year, Rep. Markey organized the successful effort to save the program.

MMRS was established in the wake of the deadly release of sarin nerve gas in a Tokyo subway and the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Building in Oklahoma City in 1995. The program provides funds to 125 municipal authorities in 43 states for local first responder planning, training, exercises, equipment, and pharmaceutical caches. MMRS is designed to enhance local capabilities for coordinating local fire, police, hospital, and public health agencies in the event of terrorist WMD attack, including nuclear, biological, chemical, and radiological weapons.

Rep. Markey concluded, “We know that al Qaeda is seeking radioactive materials and technology to launch a devastating attack, and that hundreds of radioactive sources have been lost or stolen in the U.S. and around the world. First responders will be on the frontlines if there is a terrorist attack in our communities, and we must provide them with the tools they need to do their difficult jobs. I am hopeful that Congress will act once again to reverse the Bush Administration’s unwise plan to eliminate this critical program,” Rep. Markey concluded.

In addition to Rep. Markey, the letter was signed by the following Members of Congress: Holmes Norton, Engel, Payne, Berman, Cummings, Moran (VA), Ackerman, Frank, Owens, Maloney, Waters, Rangel, Harman, Lantos, Rush, Conyers, Thompson (MS), Brown (FL), Pastor, Ortiz, Larson, Tubbs Jones, Schakowsky, McCollum, Tauscher, McDermott, Weiner, Loretta Sanchez, Carnahan, Snyder, Van Hollen, Grijalva, Abercrombie, Bernice Johnson, DeGette, Miller (NC), Lee, Moore, Kucinich, McCarthy, Langevin, Case, Wexler, Porter, Bonner, Ford, Lewis (GA), Schwartz, McGovern, Higgins, Israel, Cardoza, Capuano, Lynch, Neal

A copy of the letter and additional information on the MMRS program is available at Rep. Markey’s website, <http://www.house.gov/markey>.

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